



State of South Carolina Office of the Governor

MARK SANFORD
GOVERNOR

POST OFFICE BOX 12267
COLUMBIA 29211

February 24, 2010

The Honorable Robert W. Harrell, Jr.
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Post Office Box 11867
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Dear Mr. Speaker and Members of the House:

I am hereby vetoing and returning without my approval H. 4431, R-135.

This bill, along with H. 4432, R-136, would establish a finance committee to oversee the financial operations of the Fairfield County School District and increase the number of members of the Fairfield County School Board from seven to nine. The two new board and finance committee members would be appointed by the Fairfield County legislative delegation.

We are told these changes are ultimately about moving toward a greater level of financial accountability and making sure more money is spent in the classroom. We applaud this, but given our long-held beliefs in home rule, we believe efforts to change this should not be done in a way that takes power and authority, however well or poorly managed, from those elected locally. In addressing the problem Senator Creighton Coleman and Representative Boyd Brown are seeking to remedy, I would encourage the General Assembly to look at the issues of money going into the classroom and financial accountability in school districts from a statewide perspective.

Senator Coleman and Representative Brown seem justified in their concerns about the effectiveness of the Fairfield County School Board leadership over the past few years. A recent review of the Fairfield County School District performed by AdvanceED was particularly critical of the school board's handling of financial resources. Given the primary objective in drafting this legislation is to ensure that at least 70 percent of the Fairfield County School District budget is allocated to "classroom instructional expenditures," we applaud the efforts of the Senator and Representative to do so. According to information that is found on the South Carolina Department of Education website, less than 55 percent of funds expended by the Fairfield County School Board went to "Instruction" in 2008 (the most recent year that data is currently available). Let me underscore again that we agree with Senator Coleman and Representative Brown that this amount is too low.

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Unfortunately, Fairfield County is not the only county in the state that is failing to direct sufficient funds directly into the classroom. In 2008, 32 of South Carolina's 85 school districts failed to direct at least 55 percent of expenditures to classroom instruction. In fact, 17 school districts in the state spent a lower percentage of resources on instruction than Fairfield County. We ask that the General Assembly correct this problem for students in all parts of the state and not just in one school district. In the future, our administration would support legislation requiring that all school districts in South Carolina be required to direct a minimum percentage of funds to the frontlines of education – the classroom.

In the case of Fairfield County, the people of this community have democratically elected these officials to oversee the management of their school district. While one might not agree with every – or even any – decision that these elected officials make, ultimately one must respect the judgment of the people. If the school board members are not performing adequately, we hope the voters would exercise their power to replace them periodically through the electoral process.

The Fairfield County legislative delegation, like all of us, would like to see the quality of education in their county enhanced. We agree that this begins by getting more money into the classroom. However, rather than passing a bill that will only impact one school district, we believe the more appropriate route is to pass legislation of this nature that will benefit all students in South Carolina.

For these reasons, I am hereby vetoing and returning without my approval H. 4431, R-135.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mark Sanford', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mark Sanford